ejate yearly in the great initiation festival for boys and girls. Consequently as they expect each year the lessons of their own initiation, the ceremonies are the main vehicle of Tao culture.'

There are also two Moslem ceremonies:

(c) *Jando*, the boys' Moslem baptism, which takes about seven days, and is usually worked in with *lupanda*;

(d) *Hiando*, the girls' Moslem baptism, which is the same as *jando*, but usually quite separate from *ejate*. It is important that the wife of a Moslem should have had *hiando* so that she knows how to prepare the food properly at Ramadan.

Menstrual and Other Taboos

Menstruation is held to be dangerous. A special mat is used by the woman during this time, and is rolled up and kept during the rest of the cycle. The hut is completely replastered after menstruation. Intercourse during menses leads to disease of the man. Sexual contact is dangerous to persons at certain other periods: during initiation ceremonies, during mourning, and for babies who have not been through the protective rite. The danger is thought to lie in *mdoka*, a dread disease characterized by swelling. This may be transmitted by salt in the food. Deaths are often attributed to 'salt'. Much of the significance of the mourning is that restrictions are prepared which protect the mourners against the dangers attendant on sexual activity.

Burial Rites

News of a death must be sent to the chief by a messenger carrying a single knot. The chief gives a present of calico for wrapping the body, and a goat for the burial men. These are called *mwale*, neighbours unrelated to the dead, who volunteer for certain duties. They prepare the body for burial and carry it in procession to the graveyard outside the village. No uninitiated person is allowed to see the funeral. All who attend the burial are prohibited from sexual intercourse for one month. After this time the prohibition is lifted by a ceremony of beer drinking and feasting, and on the following day all fires in the village are extinguished, and then relit, and the mourners are shaved. A year later beer is brewed for a final ceremony.

For a period after her husband's death a widow is unclean, and has to be purified by ritual intercourse with a man who is paid. The widow is not allowed to remarry for two or three years. A widower leaves his wife's village, after receiving a parting gift. The widows of ordinary persons are not inherited. If a man has himself a 'name' (rank and social position), he has an heir, who inherits also the wives of his predecessor. But if the heir (the maternal nephew) has married a cross-cousin (mother's brother's daughter) he would not consider the wife's mother as his inherited wife.

Before the burial the dead man's hut used to be destroyed, together with his possessions. Immediately afterwards a consultation is held as to whether retaliatory action against sorcerers is called for. The *mwale*'s duties include not only the conducting of the burial, but also the subsequent inquiry and the conduct of the second ceremony, the beer drinking, at which they share the mourners. A man who has

* Male ceremonies for girls' initiation: Chisbul, [illegible]; Gwasuwa, [illegible]; Chisbul, [illegible]; Gwasuwa (qual Chewa), [illegible]; Dudi, [illegible]; Chisbul(ba), [illegible]; Mwalimuwali, [illegible]; Wiwisa, [illegible]; Jalawasa, [illegible].

[2] But I have used illustrative material from other villages where it was more complete or less confusing. In Appendices, I set out genealogies, hut censuses, and plans, of the two villages. In the text I use reference numbers in these genealogies, by generation and position in generations, to identify people.

It is necessary to select illustrations because the structural uniformities I wish to describe are often hidden by the idiosyncrasies of particular examples. The general principles of social structure, as I present them here, have been abstracted from my observations over a period of two years, not only in Cikoja and Ali Kanenka villages, but in many others in the Machinga area. I present my illustrations not with any belief that they prove my analysis, but only to help the reader see the principles I describe in the reality of Yao life.

The First Week

[3] I spent the first two weeks of my stay in Nyasaland talking over my proposed field work with the Administrative officers of the Nyasaland Government. The Provincial Commissioner suggested that I should do a round trip of the Yao area with the District Commissioner at Zomba. After this tour, in consultation with Chief Kawinga and the District Commissioner, I decided that the best place for me to start would be in Chief Chiwaula's area. The District Commissioner then took me to Chiwaula who indicated a site in his court-village where I could pitch my tent.

[4] For the first week I held meetings with the chief and some of the older men of the vicinity and spent most of my time making notes on material culture, 'customs' and history. On the first page of my notes I find that there is a good description of Yao beliefs in sorcery, all described as if it were in the past: a full year was to pass before my informants were prepared to admit that these beliefs were still held. After a week or two of this [13] general activity I decided to try my first village census. The [5] results were hardly encouraging. Often when villagers knew [6] I was coming they slipped away into the bush. Those who [7] were left frequently refused resolutely to answer my questions. Many rumours arose to explain my presence. I heard, for example, that I had been sent by the Government to record the names of those to be taken away as soldiers for the next

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

war. I heard that I was an American spy, and also that I was a spy for the Portuguese, because Nyasaland, or at least the Yao area of it, was going to become part of Mozambique. I spent much of my enforced idleness during these early months copying down texts in Yao from my clerk and translating them into English.

Towards the end of 1946, when the rains had set in, I decided to move into a vacant house on a tobacco market about five miles from where I had first pitched my tent. I then started to make a census of the nearest village. Here the attitude of the people was markedly different and I established friendly and happy relationships with them. For some weeks I systematically made censuses of the surrounding villages, and got my first insight into the structural principles of Yao villages. I left this area to attend a conference of research officers of the Institute, and when I returned I pitched my tent in the village into which my personal servant had married. By this time I was speaking some of the language and had started to talk to people directly. I now began to establish a set of informants who would come to my tent in the afternoons and dictate texts to me in Yao on various topics of interest, which I immediately translated into English. The mornings I spent out in neighbouring villages. It was during this period that I gradually heard about the various ceremonies that were being performed and was able to attend them. My wife too was able to attend some of the women's ceremonies. Some months later I moved down to Kawinga's area and pitched my tent in one of the largest and most complex villages I could find and made a complete census of it. I chose this village so that it would be sufficiently close for me to attend Kawinga's court, which was the largest in the area. I left the field in September 1947, and in September 1948 returned to Chiwale's village. I now engaged a new clerk who could speak no English and who came from the village in Chiwale's area where I had originally settled. During my second trip I visited Jalasi, Kanuli and Kalembo chiefdoms, all in different parts of the Yao country, and made village censuses in each.

The procedure I adopted in making village censuses was as follows. Usually I visited the headman a day or so in advance to explain my intention to him. Most of the villages I studied were fairly close to that in which I was camped so that the people

one of Mahenge's sons died, after giving birth to quintuplets, some thirty years ago. Deformed children are buried alive. A large number of children is always hoped for and where polygamy is practised, some families are of considerable size, although the mortality among young children is very high. It is, of course, very difficult to state the child-bearing period among natives. It does not start as early as is commonly supposed, and I think the consensus is found within about the same limits as among Europeans.

Death. Wadirwe of Wyamkondi live to a good old age. That such is not the case I have found to be one of the many fallacious beliefs concerning natives which should be relegated to the realm of exploded theories, as I have pointed out elsewhere.*

Death in old age is recognized as a natural event but apart from this, all sickness and death were formerly (and are still to a large extent) looked upon as the result of the machinations of some person, an idea which forms the outstanding feature in their belief in witchcraft, vumi.*

Here I shall mention the ordinary customs in the case of death. During the last hours of a mortal illness, a man is tended by his wife or wives; the head wife also constantly supporting his head on her lap or against her breast. A woman is similarly tended by her mother, sisters, and friends. As unconsciousness sets in and the extremities become cold, they say, "The spirit has gone and only the heart remains alive."

The native does not like the idea of lingering on and a man on his death-bed will say to his sons, "Now watch me that I die quickly." He may take medicine to help him over that time or he may give his sons instructions as to what to do. Should a man linger unconscious for a long time, friends will ask his sons, "Did he give you any instructions?" If he has done so, the sons will then carry them out. This perhaps consists of building themselves a residence left by their father, while they stand on the roof of his house. Sometimes, the natives say of a lingering case, "Ah, perhaps he has eaten of a tortoise's heart!" Knowing the phenomenon of the tortoise's heart and believing that by partaking of it, the same property can be conferred on the heart of a man.

When death is manifest, the body is covered with a cloth by a brother, a son, or some other person in attendance. The eyes are closed, the mouth shut, and at the present time, the body straightened out. This, however, is a recent practice copied from the Anyanja, Europeans, and Mohammedans.

News of the death must be sent to the chief, and a messenger goes to his village where the chief and his people sit in the village open space. He carries a bow in his hand. The presence of a single bow always denotes bad tidings. One of the chief's sons, seeing the stranger approach with the single bow, will jump up and take the bow. He is joined by the others and they go away to the cross-roads where they kill the bow, pluck it, cook it, and eat it. In the meantime, the messenger delivers his news to the chief who will produce from his house about eight yards of white calico; if the deceased has been a much respected

* Hugh D. Simmons, "The Wanyam of Ungoni", (Lecture, April 15, 1911, p. 1400). * This title, p. 340.

person, he may also give a gnat. The office is to wrap up the body of the dead, the gnat is for the embalmers, smile.

Until eight or ten years ago, the Wayne buried their dead in a posture of complete flexion. The preparation of the body after death is carried out by friends from a neighboring village who volunteer for the service. They are known as *watio*, (sing. *watiot*). Marshmallow[1] thinks the word originally meant *relatives*; it has essentially the opposite meaning now. The corpse is washed in ordinary water and no embalmment is made. The limbs, formerly, were then flexed on the body and at all the joints. The clenched hands were placed under the chin of the least loved or the hands were spread over the face of the loved dead, while the legs were tightly bent at the knees and brought up close against the abdomen. The corpse was securely bound in this position and adorned with a loin-cloth of bark. The body of a man bound still and extended was a source of great trouble. Water was heated, and the body bathed until it was as relaxed as possible. As much force would then be applied as was necessary to gain the required degree of flexion, the bones often being broken in the process.

In the case of a woman, her female friends put on her bark cloth loin covering, but the washing and dressing up of the body were usually done by men unless there were women particularly skilled in the operation.

The flexed body was then set up on the dressed[2] sleeping mat within the hut, and from time to time, as long as it remained exposed, it was washed, people coming from other villages to offer their services for this task. Watchers sat continually by the body, the wife and perhaps a brother on either side, while others slept in the hut to take their turn later. The rest of the mourners sat on the veranda about the door.

As soon as the male had finished their work, wailing began, started by the wife and carried on by all the women of the village and the women relatives from elsewhere. Wailing continued all day until about ten in the evening, and then started again between two and three in the morning. This went on for three or four days or was intermittent for a longer time, always recommencing with the arrival of a party from another village. I have never heard of four being put on the heads by Tao mourners, as mentioned in Africanus.[3]

News of a death was always sent to all the relatives, and burial might be delayed [illegible] after for the arrival of those from a distance. Under such circumstances, the body was enclosed in a casing of bark, the ends being closed by bamboo pegs. Exaggerated signs of grief were sometimes made by the mourners who beat their breasts with their hands while they bumped their heads against the ground or a wall, but the Tao did not indulge in the excesses of the Assyrian seer Lahe Chihre, who practiced a kind of flagellation, the wailers within the house meeting any new-comers at the door and beating them with sticks. This treatment was not reciprocal. Women shun-bit the wailing; a man indulging in such excesses would be laughed at. His part in the old days when the natives possessed firearms was

[1] See intro, p. 200. [2] Op. cit., vol. I, p. 100. [3] Ibid.